

NETRUNNER™

THE CARD GAME

UPSTALK

He flashed the cred chip, and the reader blinked twice—red. The SEA officer glanced up, stifled a yawn, and blinked down at Nasir. His voice projected through a small speaker in the glastic screen. “Please swipe again, sir.”

Nasir swiped the chip again, and the reader blinked red twice more. “Do you have another chip?” enquired the officer, tugging at his yellow cap. Nasir shook his head. The officer pressed a button. A man in a stylish suit standing behind Nasir harrumphed, muttering ostensibly to himself. “They let just about anybody into the stalk these days.”

A pair of officers, also wearing yellow caps and uniforms, approached from behind the tollgate. “Please come with me, sir,” said the younger of the two, a woman with her brunette hair tied smartly in a ponytail.

Her companion was an older man with a stoic face. He grabbed Nasir’s arm and led him past the teeming masses to a hatch against the far wall, labeled “Authorized Personnel Only.” A wave of the hand, and the hatch buzzed open. The shoes of the officers clicked neatly on the spotless tile of the hallway beyond. In the low gravity, they held him a centimeter above the floor with no apparent effort. The hallway was littered with similar but unlabeled hatches, and they entered one on the end. The room was small, with a single table and two chairs, but there was a breathtaking view of earth suspended in space covering an entire wall. A holo, Nasir assumed.

“Please have a seat... Mr. Meidan,” said the woman, flicking through her PAD.

Nasir saw himself to the lone chair. It was surprisingly comfortable.

“What brings you upstalk for the first time?” She gave him a reassuring smile. Nasir glanced at her companion; he seemed particularly interested in the wall opposite his spot in front of the door.

“Sightseeing,” said Nasir, returning her smile with one of his own. He obsequiously rubbed his forearm, activating his implants to send a signal to the PAD in his bag. The SEA ice was weaker here, on the inside.

She frowned. “Normally a failed swipe does not require our attention. However, for someone with your... skills, extra care must be taken.”

Nasir smiled. “I graduated middle of my class at EIT, and I am a systems analyst for WARD. I’m no one special.”

The woman sat down on the table in front of him and leaned closer. Her name tag read “Angela Williams.” “The beanstalk is equipped with the most advanced security system in the solar system. Retinal and facial recognition software tracks thousands of individuals each hour as they make their way from the Root to Midway and beyond. For those whom we cannot ID in this fashion, backscatter screening registers at each checkpoint. The most... interesting 2% are monitored personally via our control room.”

Nasir leaned closer himself. “Do you think someone with an empty cred account is interesting?”

They stared into each other’s eyes, neither blinking. “Normally vagrants are transferred to the next pod down and a lock is placed on their record. But normally vagrants have not had over a dozen dropped charges of electronic intrusion. Stop me if I am telling you something you don’t know, Mr. Meidan.”

He said nothing. She glanced at her partner, who, while still silent, was now watching him intently.

Angela slid back off the table. “It appears that our current interview is at an end, unless you are ready to tell me why you are really headed upstalk.”

Nasir reached for his bag, and tossed it on the table. His sudden movement made the SEA officers flinch, even though it would have been impossible for a dangerous substance to have made it this far upstalk. “I might not tell you, but I can show you.”

The silent partner whispered something in Angela’s ear. She nodded, and he left the room. She turned her attention back to Nasir. “Okay then. Show me.”

He slowly stood up and reached into his bag, extracting a pear-shaped bottle with a small amount of red liquid splashing around in the bottom. She sucked in a breath as there was a spark of recognition in her eyes. “How did you get that?”

“I need something in return.”

She glanced at him, wary. “If you think I can—” Nasir waved his hand to cut her off.

“Passage to Heinlein via the Ferry, first class. My cred sticks, as you see, are currently empty.”

“That’s it?”

“And a pre-approved class-1 case.” Class-1 cases were rare. A pre-approved class-1 was immune to scanning and search.

She was mulling it over. “I would need authorization...”

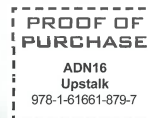
“I think you will find that you have the authorization.” Nasir smiled.

“Stay here.”

Several minutes passed. He wasn’t actually sure if the hack had completed successfully, but he had to trust in his preparation.

The door opened. It was the silent one. He had in hand a small silver case. He proffered it to Nasir, who nodded his approval. “Follow me to the Ferry,” the man said, emotionless. Nasir left the bottle on the table and followed the man from the room. Next stop, Starport Kaguya. The moon. Destiny.

— To be continued in *The Spaces Between Data Pack...*



ANDROID™ NETRUNNER™ THE CARD GAME

HONOR AND PROFIT EXPANSION

The network lies before you...
Which path will you take?

Jinteki and three new Criminal runners take center stage in *Honor and Profit*, the second deluxe expansion for *Android: Netrunner*. Its 165 new cards introduce a dizzying array of tricks and traps, events to alter the tempo of your games, new psi talents, and six new identity cards that promote all-new, highly specialized deck-building strategies. Additionally, fans of every faction will discover valuable new tech among the expansion's neutral ambushes, ice, ops, AI, and connections.



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